

Claims

- [c1] 1.A hot and cold vending machine, comprising:
a product compartment;
a refrigeration system;
a ventilation system in communication with the refrigeration system and the product compartment;
the ventilation system comprising a valve positioned in communication with the product compartment; and
a heater positioned about the product compartment;
the valve and the heater being selectively activated such that product compartment may be hot or cold.
- [c2] 2.The hot and cold vending machine of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of product compartments and wherein the ventilation system comprises a plurality of valves.
- [c3] 3.The hot and cold vending machine of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of hot compartments and a plurality of cold compartments.
- [c4] 4.The hot and cold vending machine of claim 1, wherein the refrigeration system comprises a removable refrigeration cassette.

- [c5] 5.The hot and cold vending machine of claim 1, wherein the product compartment comprises a plurality of product bins.
- [c6] 6.The hot and cold vending machine of claim 5, wherein the plurality of product bins comprises a plurality of vents positioned therein.
- [c7] 7.The hot and cold vending machine of claim 1, wherein the ventilation system comprises a supply air duct on a first side of the product compartment and a return air duct on a second side of the product compartment.
- [c8] 8.The hot and cold vending machine of claim 7, wherein the ventilation system comprises a first valve positioned about the supply air duct and a second valve positioned about the return air duct.
- [c9] 9.The hot and cold vending machine of claim 1, wherein the valve comprises a butterfly valve.
- [c10] 10.The hot and cold vending machine of claim 1, wherein the refrigeration system comprises a refrigeration device.
- [c11] 11.The hot and cold vending machine of claim 10, wherein the refrigeration device comprises a Stirling cycle cooler.

- [c12] 12.The hot and cold vending machine of claim 10,
wherein the refrigeration device comprises a Rankine cycle device.
- [c13] 13.The hot and cold vending machine of claim 10,
wherein the refrigeration system comprises a heat exchanger in communication with the refrigeration device.
- [c14] 14.The hot and cold vending machine of claim 10,
wherein the refrigeration system comprises a fan positioned adjacent to the heat exchanger.
- [c15] 15.The hot and cold vending machine of claim 1,
wherein the refrigeration system comprises a ventilation pathway in communication with the ventilation system.
- [c16] 16.The hot and cold vending machine of Claim 1,
wherein the product compartment comprises a plurality of horizontal product compartments.
- [c17] 17.The hot and cold vending machine of Claim 1,
wherein the product compartment comprises a plurality of vertical product compartments.
- [c18] 18.A hot and cold vending machine, comprising:
a plurality of product compartments;
a refrigeration system;
a ventilation system in communication with the refriger-

ation system and the plurality of product compartments; the ventilation system comprising a plurality of valves such that one or more of the valves are positioned about each of the plurality of product compartments; and a plurality of heaters such that one of the heaters is positioned within each of the plurality of the product compartments; the plurality of valves and the plurality of heaters being selectively activated.

[c19] 19.The hot and cold vending machine of claim 18, wherein the plurality of product compartments comprise a plurality of cold compartments and a plurality of hot compartments.

[c20] 20.The hot and cold vending machine of claim 18, wherein the refrigeration system is removable.

[c21] 21.A method of operating a vending machine with a number of product compartments, with each of the number of product compartments comprising a heater therein, and with the vending machine having a refrigeration system in communication with each of the product compartments via a ventilation system, the method comprising:
determining which of the product compartments are to be hot and which of the product compartments are to be

cold;

opening or confirming that the ventilation system in communication with those product compartments that are to be cold is open; and

closing or confirming that the ventilation system in communication with those product compartments that are to be hot is closed.

[c22] 22.The method of claim 21, further comprising the step of turning on the heater in those product compartments that are to be hot.

[c23] 23.The method of claim 21, further comprising the step of circulating chilled air from the refrigeration system through those product compartments that are to be cold via the ventilation system.

[c24] 24.The method of claim 21, further comprising the steps of determining which of the product compartments are be at room temperature and closing or confirming that the ventilation system in communication with those product compartments that are to be at room temperature is closed.